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THE TROUBLED TIME

by George Morgenstern

The mistletoe is a symbol of peacemaking and love. It is associated in the minds of all of us with Christmas, although the character attributed to it dates from the pre-Christian days of Balder, the pagan god of light and peace. Despite the pleasant reputation of this plant, it was, in the year now ending, subjected to attack in Australia by flame-throwers and atomic energy.

There was a reason for this. No sentimental consideration could obscure the fact that mistletoe is a parasite in the woodlands, the enemy of the forest trees. The flame-thrower was employed as a quick executioner, and radioactive tracers, furnished by the United States Atomic Energy Commission, were employed to study how the mistletoe saps the water and mineral salts from the trees and starves them to death.

Those given to seeking symbolic meanings might read this report from the forests to their own satisfaction. Out of their fondness for the holiday season and the things associated with it, they might have pity for the mistletoe, and, in a larger application, say to themselves: "Now they are even killing Christmas." Others, of a more ironic turn of mind, might proceed beyond this elementary response and find it appropriate that the searing instruments of death hitherto reserved by men for one another should now foreshadow the ultimate scorching and cauterization of all life on the planet. The sober minded, looking about them, would be reminded that the struggle for ascendancy and survival was not confined to the human species, but that, as Darwin recounted, it was common to all living things. In this they might find some veiled excuse for the treatment of man by man.

But still it would probably seem harsh that the Christmas sprig should suffer an extinction as complete and final, let us say, as that of some United States Marine or some nameless Chinese in cotton padded uniform, inoffensive except for his automatic weapon and the orders he was given, both now mounds beneath the snow along the Koto road. And yet, this sentimentality would be more of a credit to the heart than to the head, for those who subscribed to it would have forgotten that the mistletoe, too, had betrayed its legendary nature.

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Balder, the pagan spirit of peace and light, was a god who died. Loki, the contriver of grief and mischief, placed in the hands of the blind Hoth a dart of mistletoe, the only thing in creation which, because of the innocence of its attributes, had not taken an oath to do Balder no harm. And by this instrument the hero god was slain.

II

But the gods -- not only those of Teutonic mythology, but all of the pagan gods of the Western World -- were fated for a surer extinction. The minds of men were receptive to a greater hope and a greater faith than the old gods could evoke or command. This unresolved longing was fulfilled. There could have been no more winsome setting than the manger at Bethlehem, with the ox and the ass gazing down. There could not have been a more dazzling light than the Star shining down. There could not have been a song sweeter than that of the Angels: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men."

Nor could the promise of the Prophet have been more completely fulfilled:

> "The people that have walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.
>
> "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."

The ministry of Jesus was not long, but its influence exercised the most profound claim upon the mind and spirit of man of all that have competed for his attention. When that ministry was ended, there were others to carry it on, and the power of their persuasion was celebrated in the triumphant cry, "This is the victory which overcometh the world -- even our faith."

Those who live through these times may find their faith severely tried. It will seem to them that this is an age of unrelieved horrors. In a generation men have slaughtered each other in two universal wars, with a third seemingly in prospect. The heat of the sun can be conjured like some dread genie and turned upon one's enemy, his fellow men. Among hundreds of millions of humankind, nothing is permitted to be rendered unto God. Men live and die, and are ordered about in either condition, according to dreadful mechanistic formulas. Evil is confident; the free man looks forward with fear to being deprived of a free will, like the sleepwalking prisoners condemned by "people's courts" or the men in an Orwell novel who know neither privacy nor volition.

Certainly this age provides a test of faith.

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III

But, let us ask ourselves, have not the times always tried men's souls? The time of the Nativity brings to mind an impression of serene, starlit nights and of days fresh with the hope of new beginnings, "bright as a banner, fresh, unfurled, to music suddenly". But we know that this was not so.

The great Jewish scholar, Joseph Klausner, has described the political, social and economic conditions prevailing at the time and in the place where Jesus was born. The Judaea into which Jesus was born was not part of what would now be called "the free world". It was a subjugated country, its condition determined not by internal facts but by external forces -- the power of the Roman legions. The ancient glories of Israel had had a rebirth under the Maccabaeans, but the Herodian kings had destroyed what had been rebuilt.

It was not a time when political liberty flourished or unfettered minds and spirits were encouraged. The dictator was as absolute as any we now know. To depart from the canonical writings, we have this picture of the man whose will was supreme:

> ". . . he feared for his life and his crown. Since he was afraid, he was cruel. . . . He ordered the execution of his three sons. Likewise, ministers, servants.
> "At his command three hundred chiefs of the army were stoned, killed like dogs."

Such is the character of that Herod who reigned over Judaea. But who, in his own mind, cannot find the present-day parallel?

The people were equally weary of enduring the kingdom of Edom and the kingdom of Rome, which were as synonymous as the "people's republic" of Poland and the U.S.S.R. would be today. But an army and police were as effective then as now in subduing the restiveness of the victims of the authoritarian state, so that, as Klausner tells it, the repressed urge toward nationalism among a people believing in the power of the spirit found another outlet.

The government forced upon such a people seemed like the harsh visitation of God, and this punishment, so they thought, was to precede the imminent redemption. In their minds the "Kingdom of Heaven" and the "Kingdom of Edom" were two great opposing conceptions, each of which called up the picture of the other, and among those "not of this world" the belief in a Messianic deliverance was strong and unconquerable.

IV

This was the world into which Jesus came. We may say that our age is the most disturbing mankind has known. It is no more troubled than when the world entered upon the Christian era and went forward through

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days of almost uninterrupted trouble and, at time, of supreme tragedy, with a hope and faith that surmounted every trial.

The Christian belief involves a choice between opposites: of certainty and doubt, of good and evil, or the perfectibility of man and his debasement, of triumph and defeat. It does credit to man by attributing to him not only dignity but free will. It makes a sufficient allowance for his fallibility so that, at times, he may gravitate toward the negative expression of his personality and yet escape thralldom to evil in the end. To sin, man must sin consciously. At the last, man's choice must be between the ephemeral and the ultimate values, which alone can justify the oftentimes sorry pilgrimage of human existence.

A creed of such ethical power, calling so greatly upon the inner resources of faith, emphasizing at once individuality and brotherhood, answering so many things but leaving to mystery some of man's most tantalizing and searching questions, might seem to have been destined to become universal. Yet we know that it has not. For no universalism has ever succeeded. The followers of Mohammed had such a goal, and resorted to far more strenuous means to attain it, but the movement was limited. The Roman empire, the Mongols, the Holy Roman empire sought to establish a political universalism, and they failed.

When, therefore, we see a political substitute for religion, which rejects peace and brotherhood, which celebrates force as no believer in religion by the sword ever did, which is confident of triumph through cynicism and deceit, which deliberately rejects Christianity and elevates the anti-Christ, what do we fear? It cannot conquer the world where greater powers are still waiting to do so. It cannot command the minds of men exposed to greater forces of persuasion. It cannot win to tyranny men who have been offered freedom in will and in conscience.

The lasting power of the Child born at Bethlehem is that His life and teachings have no concern with the transitory, but have chosen all eternity for their fulfillment. The work is never done; incompleteness is always demanding completion. So Henry Adams meditated upon the appearance of instability given by the slender nervure, the springing motion of the broken arch, the leap downwards of the flying buttress in the great Gothic cathedrals that had endured through the centuries -- the visible effort to throw off a visible strain -- and admonished, ". . . never let us forget that Faith alone supports it, and that, if Faith fails, Heaven is lost."

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Not Merely Gossip *A Supplement to* Human Events Vol. VII, No. 51

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By Frank C. Hanighen December 20, 1950

THE TIDE OF CHRISTMAS: It may be merely because of the charitable spirit, bred of Christmastime, but Washington finds the picture of the world less forbidding this week, than in past weeks. The bulk of the Chinese Communist forces in Korea have been slowed -- by their lengthening supply lines, say military observers. The headlines from Brussels seem more clement. And only a Scrooge would deny Harry S. Truman some presents after his speech last week.

Whatever else may be said of that oratorical effort, it was followed by more favorable reactions than expected. (1) The public liked Truman's appointment of Charles E. Wilson, an industrialist who inspires confidence. (2) Whether or not the speech had anything to do with it, the exasperating wild-cat strike of the trainmen stopped. (3) The appointment of General Eisenhower -- that magic name -- stirs hopes that he may save the projected European army from aborting at birth. (4) Finally, the word "emergency" still carries implications of "action". Truman is indeed riding the tide of Christmas -- with appointments and a resounding Word.

On one point raised above, Eisenhower's ability to save the projected European army, we must report negatively. After the announcement of the General's appointment, we queried a particularly well-informed source. For several years, this individual has been a strong advocate of the European army. In recent months he shifted -- saying that the opposition of France, and the developing opposition of the Germans, has ruined chances of such an army. When we consulted him yesterday, he replied, "Eisenhower's appointment hasn't changed the awful situation in the slightest." The name of Eisenhower -- from all reports we receive -- is literally anathema to the mass of the German people and their leaders. Rightly or wrongly, they bracket the General together with Morgenthau, as symbolizing the worst of the postwar treatment of Germany. If the Americans think that Ike is the ideal man to win over the Germans to rearmament, they had better have another "think". Not a single newspaper we have seen has touched on this point -- evidence of the continuing execrable coverage of the German problem.

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APPROACH OF AUSTERITY: Several objectives were in Mr. Truman's mind in declaring a national emergency in terms of war, and in replacing the rearmament effort with what is intended to be a defined war program. He made quite clear that the Kremlin is behind the turn of events in Korea, and he left no debatable ground that this country is now striving to hold its own against the imminent threat of the armed might of Russia. His declaration does not change very much the scheme on which business and industry have been running since mid-autumn, but it does make evident that there is a long and hard pull at hand, with more austerity, higher taxes, more shortages in civilian goods and more demands upon manpower, than this country has known before. In lieu of voluntary controls, which have not succeeded very well anywhere, and sometimes failed dismally, he prescribes a pattern of fixed and rigid controls, although it may be months before they are in full force. The way out, evidently, is in expanding production and control of inflation.

War mobilization is not designed to be a sudden, hurried change; Mr. Truman hopes that it can be gradual, step by step. But whether Russia will hold off for a measured rearmament by this country, and by the rest of the non-Communist world, is by no means certain. Mr. Truman gives no assurance that Russia, more fully armed than the U.S., or any of its allies, will not decide that quick attack offers the greatest promise. Truth is that the Korean debacle finds Mr. Truman and his top

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officials utterly unprepared to undertake the task of full and rapid mobilization. They are only beginning to grasp the magnitude of the problems involved, and of the difficulty that goes with a regimented economy. Neither is there agreement among them as to the methods that will be pursued in achieving war mobilization. The powers and functions of any official who is engaged in the effort are not well defined, and quite often clashing and overlapping.

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TOWN TALK: It was a false alarm. A local news report that the Soviet Embassy on 16th Street was installing a bomb shelter was superseded by one, better founded, that actually only some fire-hose equipment was being put in. Investigation among plumbers in the District revealed that the latter is the truth. The plumbing contractor said his work did not necessarily foreshadow an early fire-bomb attack on Washington; such installations are in almost all buildings the size of the Soviet Embassy. The Russians are just a little late -- that's all.

---- A new high (or low) in something-or-other was achieved last week. Chief Justice Vinson, who has been frequently mentioned as a possible successor to Acheson, received an offer of the job of "baseball czar" to succeed "Happy" Chandler. The Justice declined.

---- We learn that, in the historic McCarthy-Pearson struggle in the washroom of the Sulgrave Club, Senator Richard Nixon tried to separate the combatants, saying, "Let a Quaker stop this." (Nixon is of that faith.) He failed -- for McCarthy delivered the slap heard round the club. It was a slap -- not a punch.

---- We were pleasantly surprised, two evenings after the famous event, to find that Senator McCarthy is not the fierce, troglodytic creature pictured by his critics. At another (and more peaceful) party, he seemed to us shy and retiring; blushing and backing diffidently away from comment on the incident. Instead of flexing his biceps, he spent most of the evening in the kitchen, cooking venison stew. He made only one vigorous assertion: that the venison came from Wisconsin.

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TRUMAN'S TEMPER: Christmas Day may reveal the President in a mellow frame of mind. But this is the report we receive on his mood during the past few weeks: The President is becoming clearly worried and harassed, with temperament on an edge, and impatient of any official or subordinate who does not agree with him, or offers a suggestion that runs counter to the working of his own mind. He is more intolerant of advice, bristles at criticism in Congress or elsewhere, and caustically resents differences in opinion. He is showing increasing resentment to the fact that Southern Democrats and Republicans, when acting as a coalition, will be in full control of the new Congress, and there is no likelihood of the enactment of any of the remaining proposals on which he made his campaign in 1948. Labor spokesmen with whom he has had close contact in the past receive a very cool reception since the election, reflected in a refusal by Mr. Truman so far to select any labor spokesman for a key administrative or policy-making job in war mobilization. Members of Congress after visits with him describe his attitude toward them as caustic, and one of "testy self-assertion".

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VOTE OF NO CONFIDENCE: The Republcans in Congress have performed a service for representative government by their party resolutions of December 15 when they voted "no confidence" in Secretary of State Dean Acheson and demanded his dismissal from office. No fair observer can deny that, in the recent elections and particularly in the public reaction to the current crisis, the people have strongly indicated a

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lack of confidence in Acheson. At a time when national unity is invoked, it is intolerable that the Executive should retain, uncensured, the present Secretary of State. In the British or other parliamentary governments in Europe, such a situation would have long ere this been translated into a parliamentary crisis, with "no confidence" votes and possible overthrow of these governments. Yet such is the structure of our Government and so stubborn is the Chief Executive that the anomalous retention of Acheson deserves some formal political protest. Hence, the only way by which this necessary venting of a strong public feeling could be made was through the medium of the caucus, first by the House Republicans, then by the Senate. The resultant resolutions, of course, have no force of law.

That Acheson is discredited among the American people is by this time widely known abroad; and criticism of the GOP move on the score that this step would weaken our present diplomatic negotiations is hardly valid. Foreign chancelleries recognize the situation better than some American editorial writers. What GOP members found insufferable was the charge that they were weakening "national unity"; they retorted that the President's stubbornness in keeping Acheson has undermined national unity. The apparent hesitancy of the Republicans in taking this step derives in large part from certain considerations. Unlike many of their constituents, the GOP members know full well from long, bitter experience with bureaucracy in Washington that, even if Acheson were ousted and an acceptable substitute found, State Department policy would not be bettered unless there was a thorough purge of the bureaucrats who have shaped policies. Hence their demand in the party resolutions for a "thorough house cleaning in the State Department and changes in personnel and policies responsible for the lack of confidence".

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SYMINGTON VS. AGRICULTURE: If the administrators of our new war effort have intended to drop "politics as usual", they have not succeeded very well. Take Mr. Symington. Last summer, he created an Advisory Council for his National Security Resources Board (NSRB), composed of representatives from industry, labor, agriculture and the public. When he made the selection of the Agriculture councillors, he naturally chose Albert Goss, head of the National Grange, and James G. Patton, head of the National Farmers Union; but he did not appoint Allan B. Kline, head of the American Farm Bureau Federation, by far the largest of the general farm organizations. Instead of Kline, Symington chose (or was induced to choose) Murray Lincoln, President of the Farm Bureau Insurance Company of Columbus, Ohio. Now, this insurance firm, despite its name, has no legal connection with the American Farm Bureau Federation. Consequently, the organization which undoubtedly is more representative of the American farmer than any other has been excluded from the Symington Advisory Council. Politicians have the answer why: Secretary of Agriculture Brannan, who has a bitter feud with Kline of the AFBF, preferred Lincoln, the darling of the Leftists and supporter of the famous Brannan Plan (which Kline has been fighting).

Not only has Symington excluded the largest and most powerful organization in the farm field, but at the present date he presides over a council in which the only agriculture members are Leftists: Murray Lincoln, and James G. Patton of the National Farmers Union (which has been under heavy fire of charges that it is infiltrated by Communists). This situation arose through the death of Mr. Albert Goss of the Grange last October; and the failure of Symington to appoint as his successor on the Council Mr. Herschel Newson (who succeeded Goss as Master of the Grange). It may well be that this formality will soon be put through. But even so, Murray Lincoln remains, and agricultural circles all over the country are buzzing with some sharp talk about the "Leftist politics as usual" in the body over which Symington presides. They ask: Is Symington really aware of this extraordinary setup in one of the big key councils which will run our war effort?

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Book Events

America Betrayed, and It Isn't Safe To Be An American, by Joseph P. Kamp. Two booklets published by the Constitutional Educational League, Inc., 342 Madison Ave. New York. $.50 each. Reviewed by Frank Chodorov.

Something far more "modern" than the atom bomb has come to America. It is the American political prisoner. Time was when the foreigner who suffered incarceration for political ideas automatically attained heroship, and America was proud to be the refuge from Czarism anywhere. Now we have political prisoners of our own.

An American has just come out of prison where he expiated the crime of lese majeste. His "moral turpitude" consisted of a refusal to reveal the names of his friends to Congress. Specifically, Joseph P. Kamp, executive officer of an organization known as the Constitutional Educational League, held that the Government's demand for a list of its financial supporters was an invasion of rights guaranteed to the American citizen under the Constitution, and for his obstinacy he was held "in contempt of Congress" and sent to jail.

The remarkable thing about this incident is that the newspapers hardly mentioned it. The newspapers quite properly did not play it up because the American public was not interested. A generation or two ago the case of Kamp would have been a cause celebre (like the imprisonment of Debs in 1918), but the American mind is no longer disturbed by violations of individual freedom -- the ideal has lost its flavor in the general adjustment to Statism. You cannot help thinking of this change in the American mind as you read Kamp's account of his trial, called It Isn't Safe To Be An American.

Putting aside the facts of the case, its thesis, which is also the thesis of a companion booklet called America Betrayed, is the now familiar one about the infiltration of Communists into the Government. He names names and makes accusations that, if untrue, should land him into jail for libel. The organization he represents has been publishing such charges for nearly thirty years; it is interesting to note that only now does an American Congress feel sufficiently immune from public criticism to fight back. It demands the names of those who make these publications possible for the obvious purpose of suppression by intimidation. The State has come into its own.

For the factual information they contain these booklets deserve wide reading. The story of how a comparatively small group of purposeful, astute and ruthless Communists have got control of the Washington mind is startling -- it has all the elements of a "whodunit".

But, having read the booklets, one asks the question, how is it possible for these marplots to win their way into positions of influence? Is it because they were so clever, the elected representatives so dumb? It is true that the American politician is as ignorant of Communism as a social and political philosophy as is his constituency. But, it is also true that, despite his ignorance of it, Communism represents to him something hateful, and he is as quick to send his son to fight it anywhere in the world as he is to appropriate billions in an effort to suppress it. Why does he not recognize it in those who have got control of his mind?

The answer, which Kamp ignores, is in the fact that these Communists serve a useful purpose. They are skilled in the ways of accumulating power, the summum bonum of politics, and make excellent teachers. They know all about organization, can write laws with teeth, are adept at every detail of strategy. They are handy to have around. It is only necessary for them to keep their long-term purpose under cover, and they are quite skillful at that too.

America will not be saved by getting rid of Communists. The real danger is the trend toward Statism -- the general attitude that condones the imprisonment of Americans for holding ideas contrary to those who wield power.

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